

Blessings

The last straggling gleams of sunlight had bade farewell to the windows of mill and shop, which a few minutes before they had playfully gilded. The curling rings and tunnels of smoke that now rose from the tall chimneys of these hives of industry told of a day that was spent.

Within the office of the Doyle & Benson shop, where the daylight had not long vanished, Dan Doyle, one of the proprietors, leaned his fat elbow on his desk and listened while Jean Larochelle, his clerk, talked in his soft, liquid tones.

"Fine thing, Jean! Nice custom!" Dan remarked.

"Yes, well, good night, Mr. Doyle!" Jean's dark, expressive eyes flashed and his tall, lithe figure swung out of the door.

"Good night, boy," Dan Doyle rose and ventured into an inner office. "Hello, boss!" he called cheerily as he entered.

Tom Benson looked up. Gray was the color of hair and eyes. But the eyes were bright, sharp, and revealed a mind, keen and alert.

"Wake up, old man! The holiday didn't hit you hard like Jean!" his chubby-faced partner continued.

"Darn it! Massachusetts didn't need another holiday—until some fool decided we ought to start the New Year—loafing!" Benson exclaimed.

Dan Doyle whistled—the other's ire made little impression on him.

"Perhaps," Dan thrust his hands into his coat pockets. "Kind of a nice thing—Jean Larochelle was just now telling me. 'Tis a French custom for the young people to go back home on New Year's Day—all the sons and daughters—and kneel down and ask for their father's and mother's blessing!"

"Um," Benson grunted but listened.

"Yes, Jean spent the day in Brentville, and they had a family reunion—all journeying back home on that day to get the old folks' blessing. It is a French or a French-Canadian custom!"

"One of their good ones!" Benson admitted with another grunt.

"Say," Dan glanced at the pile of papers on the desk. "Going to work all night, Tom? I can't. The wife is waiting. Your New Year's resolution must have sounded like the poet Hood—'Work, work, work!'" With a laugh, Dan vanished.

Benson settled himself back in his chair and took up his papers again. An instant later he dropped them from his long, lean fingers.

"Blessings, blessings," he repeated, and a quick pain shot through his heart. "Confound these French and Irish with their customs and their lingo!"

But his quarrel was not with either he had mentioned, but with his own thoughts and himself.

He liked Dan Doyle, his cheerful, honest friend for twenty years. When they had but little and now much success they had stood together and stood the testing well. No, it was with himself that Tom Benson argued.

He drew down his desk, locked it and walked out of the office.

But his inner disturbance had not abated when he reached home.

"You're late again tonight, Dad," chided the dark-eyed girl who met him in the hall and brushed his cheek with a light kiss. "Isn't it a fine night, Dad?"

"Yes, Bab," he assented, but his voice lacked vim.

Elf-like, eager-eyed Barbara viewed all the world as nappy. "Hurry to dinner, Dad! We are going to a party, you know!"

"Oh, I forgot!" He usually forgot such incidentals.

"Who is going?"

"Tom, Anne and I."

"All hands," he commented.

"Yes. We told you all about it—the Allens are giving it."

A comfortable fireside and home lights had not eased the aching in Tom Benson's heart. He threw aside the newspaper that he had made a pretense of reading when a few minutes before the trio comprising his family had come to say a merry word of parting. There was Tom, his only son—a good, manly chap—the laughing, little Bab and the more demure and staid Anne—all off for an evening's pleasure. And he was alone!

"I'm blue!" he pondered aloud. "Dan Doyle's nonsense about the blessings—" he paused and a swift memory came of a girl who had pleaded with him. "Send me away with your blessing, Dad." Bitterly he had refused, "I'm an old fool!" he sighed aloud.

But, like an on-rushing current, memory would not be stemmed, and Tom Benson sank back in his chair with half-closed eyes.

Yes, another year had begun. How did it find him? Lacking in many things. The wife he loved, dead these ten years, yet whose presence was as real as if they had parted but yesterday. Death had snatched her away before she could enjoy the profits his children held so lightly. He was lonely tonight; it was heart hunger. Then his retrospective called back another face. With a cry of pain and bitterness the man turned away from the image of his sweet-faced eldest daughter.

"I did my part, God," he murmured aloud. "Yes, it was all this Church! I haven't hated it. I held my children to it—dearer than if it were my own faith. I was true to the trust and promise given, but—"

Tom Benson paused again and reflected. He had even sought to embrace this faith—when God took from him what he loved most—his wife, and bade him enter with a sacrifice in his hand in anger, he drew back. He waited. Then under the influence of his own dear child, Lilly, he was ready again to accept the grace when once more God and this Church had robbed him. His Lilly had left him to become a nun.

To be continued.

Late News of Ireland

Carlow

Died—December 22.—At his residence on Church street, Tullow, Lawrence Patrick, second son of the late John O'Toole, 2 Stony Batter, Dublin.

Cork

Rev. P. M. Murphy, P. P., Castlemartyn, acknowledges the receipt of subscriptions amounting to £134 to the Captain Donelan Presentation Fund.

The death has occurred of P. O'Brien, J. P., Clareville, who was for years a member of Mallow Board of Guardians.

The Diamond Jubilee of the Venerable Mother Mary de Pazzi, of the Middleton Presentation Convent, has just been celebrated. The convent was founded 65 years ago.

Dublin

Recently Brother Vincent Timmons, while on his way to morning devotions at the Artane Industrial School on Sunday morning, died suddenly. He was born in London 88 years ago, and was for 70 years a member of the Order. He was some time at the Novitiate, Waterford, and was afterwards in Clonmel, whence he went to Liverpool, and was Superior for a time in Tralee, Naas, Enniscorthy, and Nenagh. He had spent the last thirty years in Artane.

His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin has appointed the Very Rev. Michael Flynn, P. P., Dunlavin, to the Subdeaconal Prebend of Donoghmore (and Portion), in the Diocesan Chapter.

Kerry

The death, from influenza pneumonia of Denis J. Mulvihill, which occurred on December 8 at his home near Liatowel, caused much regret throughout Kerry, where he was well and widely known. He was one of the brothers of Sister Anne Joseph, of Concordia, Kansas, of the Order of St. Joseph. He was only 25 years old. His brother, Father Michael Mulvihill, is pastor at Goodland, Kansas; and another brother, John is the author of an excellent story, dealing with Irish home life, now appearing in the columns of The Chicago Citizen.

Tipperary

Nenagh Urban Council have decided to improve the local water supply at a cost of £3,000, and the necessary plans and specifications are being prepared for submission to the L.G. Board.

Rev. James Dunne, who died at Mattoon, Illinois, aged 30, was a native of Rossaulty, County Tipperary.

Sister Aloysius, Superioress of St. Mary's Hospital, Grand Junction, Colorado, and Sister Mary Marguerita, who, from pneumonia following influenza, died within four days of each other at the hospital, where both ministered as members of the Order of Sisters of Charity, were daughters of the late P. Heffenan, Crogue, Tipperary. The Tipperary Guardians passed a vote of sympathy with John Heffenan on the death of his sisters.

Private P. Kenna, reported as dead, prayed for in the local church, and whose obituary notice appeared in the local papers, has returned to his home in Nenagh.

Sister Gregorie de St. Joseph, Little Sisters of the Poor, died at Fulwood, Preston, in the 53rd year of her age, and the 26th of her religious life. She was a daughter of the late P. O'Brien, Lr. Graigue, Nenagh, and sister of J. O'Brien, merchant, Castle street, Nenagh.

Foreign Mission News

The Propagation of the Faith Society
348 Lexington Ave., New York City

The record of deaths among priests and bishops in the foreign missions for the year 1917 is at hand. It shows that nine bishops and 127 priests passed to their reward. The Paris Foreign Mission Society lost the greatest number—27, and the Holy Ghost Fathers come next with 17 apostles left on the hard field of battle in Africa. All the congregations suffered rather more severely than usual, which is not surprising, considering the calamities of the times.

It is reported that a number of Irish ladies have formed a medical sisterhood for mission countries. These women doctors and students have all pursued courses in the large Irish universities. They are to offer their services to the Chinese Mission Society, and will consequently work first for the missions in China. If their organization grows they will no doubt extend their ministrations to India and other pagan lands where female medical practitioners are much needed.

HEARTY THANKS FROM CHINA.

Letters written by missionaries shortly after Christmas are just now reaching the United States, but readers must remember that China, Japan and Africa are a long way off.

Bishop Faveau, C. M., of Che Kiang, China, was making a pastoral tour at the holy season and passed the feast of Christmas at Kain tsenn, at which time he did not forget to offer thanks for those who have helped to lighten his many burdens. While going through Hu-chow he saw the three missionaries who work in that district, Fr. Legrand, Fr. McArdle and the young native priest, Fr. Fou. The district contains about 3,000 Christians, scattered in thirty stations, and Mgr. Faveau finds that since his last visit in 1914, great progress has been made, owing to the zeal of the missionaries and to the help they have received from America. New posts have been opened and old ones strengthened, and one chapel built at Kain-tsenn, in which the Bishop celebrated, very fittingly, his Christmas masses.

Altogether the Lazarists of Che Kiang may be reasonably well satisfied with the spiritual outlook for 1919.

WHAT TEN DOLLARS CAN DO.

Just about Christmas time a gift reached the convent in La Paz, Philippine Islands, of which Sister Sebastiana, is Superior, and she says the children in the central school, numbering about one hundred and seventy, and of the barrio school, where there are sixty more, mostly heathen, will be greatly aided thereby. In fact, good St. Nicholas himself seemed to have visited them.

A separate offering of ten dollars was specified for the nuns themselves, and this is what Sr. Sebastian says of it:

"But most of all, thank you for the ten dollars you sent for the needy Sisters. We bought at once some food, for we were all sick and weak and badly needed some better food than only rice. We have many privations and difficulties to endure, as you see."

The official title of the present pope of Rome is Benedict XV. His name is Giacomo Della Chiesa, and he was born near Genoa, November 21, 1854. His father, Guiseppe Chiesa, was a nobleman of considerable wealth.

Bishop Hickey Thanks Donors.

Two-thirds of St. Bernard's Debt Actually Discharged.

Bishop Thomas F. Hickey has sent the following letter to all pastors of the diocese:

It is ordinarily a simple matter to express one's thanks for kindness shown or favors received, but in the present instance the obligation is so weighty that we could not assume to discharge it, but rather to tell our clergy and laity what we would do if we could.

It is no unusual thing for priests and people to support their bishop in his undertakings; it is the history of the church constantly retold; but we believe that we are not going beyond the truth when we refer to the splendid spirit, the enthusiasm, and the success obtained in the late movement throughout the diocese for St. Bernard's Seminary as something extraordinary, worthy of the highest praise, and calling for the deepest gratitude.

We, therefore, take an early opportunity to make known to you Reverend Father, our feelings of appreciation of the important part taken by you in making the appeal a success, and also to ask you to express to your people in the warmest terms the admiration and grateful feelings of their bishop for the notable success which they have achieved for God and the church.

We can make no return for this generous loyalty except our prayers and an enduring gratitude of heart, which we pledge to you and to your devoted people. We are proud and happy to make known that up to date \$123,000 of the debt has already been paid, an evidence of the prompt payment of the pledges to the testimonial.

We thank, then, our priests, their committees of laymen, the subscribers, the laymen, the ladies who served the dinner so successfully, the press of the diocese that contributed so much valuable space in telling the story of the work, the New York State Railways that rendered courtesies in bringing guests to the seminary, in fine, every one who helped to make testimonial week for St. Bernard's Seminary a record-making period in the Diocese of Rochester.

We request most earnestly at this time that the plan adopted for a list of all subscribers be followed faithfully in every parish, and in order that uniformity may be had we ask for a typewritten copy in alphabetical order of all contributors on sheets of paper like the enclosed. These will be bound into a volume which will be preserved among the valuable documents of the Seminary for future generations. May we not ask also that this report be made as soon as possible to the Chancery Office?

Don Eduardo Toda, a Spaniard resident in London, has an incomparable library of 30,000 volumes composed of Spanish books printed in foreign countries and other foreign books relating to Spain. This library he is now installing in the magnificent Romanesque monastery of Escorial, of the Augustinian Fathers, which he has purchased and will ultimately bequeath to Catalonia.

Bishop Carrara, Vicar-Apostolic of Eritrea, Africa, has compiled a large catechism in the native language of the Tigriana.

Catholic Short Notes.

Coupon books, allowing members of the clergy to travel at two cents a mile, issued January 1st by the Federal Railroad Administration, are on sale in New York, Chicago and Atlanta, each book costing one dollar, and containing 100 coupons.

At a reception accorded to him in New Orleans, his Excellency, Apostolic Delegate Bonzano, appealed for a widespread compliance with the Pope's request for prayers that the Peace Conference may reach a just settlement.

Rev. Father John M. Poyens, pastor in Cleveland has a noted tenor voice, of lyric quality, and is likened to that of the Irish tenor John McCormack.

Father William Davitt, chaplain, U. S. A., on the day of the Armistice, ascended a tree, unfurled therefrom the Stars and Stripes, climbed down, a shell from a German battery came, exploded and killed him instantly.

The Supreme Court of Kansas decided against the closing of churches in time of epidemic.

The Archbishop of Milwaukee has anticipated the arrival of the Pope's Encyclical of Dec. 1, and directed prayers from January 1st to the conclusion of the Peace Conference.

On the campus of Notre Dame University a \$50,000 Knights of Columbus building is to be erected this year.

The enrollment this year at the theological seminary of St. Mary, in Baltimore, is 412.

The Holy See will issue no diplomatic "white book." If any work of this nature is to be given publicity, it will relate exclusively to the Pope's humanitarian efforts during the hostilities.

The Papal Under Secretary of State Mgr. Carretti, when in Paris, presented President Wilson a letter from His Holiness, the Sovereign Pontiff, pleading the President's aid on behalf of small, oppressed nations, expressing hope for a just and durable peace, and asking his good offices in aiding new countries.

Immediately on the signing of the Armistice, the people of Europe visited the churches in endless processions.

The new State of Czecho-Slovakia has a Bohemian population of 6,458,000, all of whom, except less than 200,000 are Catholic.

Georgetown University, D. C., claims 1,848 students and alumni as having served in the world war, and 31 lives lost in service.

No decision has as yet been reached regarding the Oberammergau Passion Play in 1920.

In Chili there is now an aerial postal service. In many things the republics of South America are in advance of countries of North America.

They now also term Cardinal Mercier as "the Indomitable."

The Bishop of Pittsburg, at a mass meeting on behalf of Ireland, said the Peace Conference will be a failure if Ireland is not made free and independent.

Catholics have gained a victory in Georgia.